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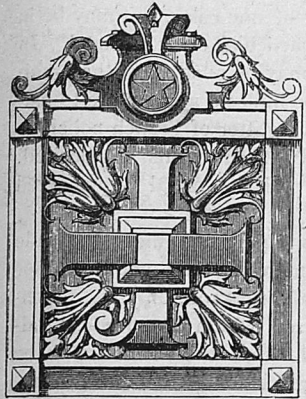
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DECORATION & FURNITURE

A COMFORTABLE DWELLING.



IN a recent number of this journal the writer attempted to give a faint idea of what wealth and talent combined could accomplish in building and furnishing a handsome residence. In the present article it is proposed to describe a house of more moderate pretensions—one more like such as is occupied, perhaps, by our average reader. The descrip-

tion will point to such practical suggestions as are to be found where common sense and good taste, accompanied by a just appreciation of the value of color, have presided over an exquisitely comfortable and homelike abode, with every thing exactly in its place, and where the prevailing tone is one of comfort and repose for the body and the mind. The house we speak of—that of Dr. Morris H. Henry, in West Twenty-third Street—is chiefly notable, perhaps, for the absence of what may be termed popular errors in decoration and furniture.

Paper is the best covering for walls, and is daily becoming more used for that purpose. Frescoing is only suitable for the walls and ceilings of fine mansions, and should be avoided in ordinary dwellings, especially as in its present meaning the term is used to convey the idea of any kind of decoration applied with a brush, from oil painting down to kalsomining. The artistic effect of "frescoing" in the majority of cases is very bad. Little thought is given to the due proportion which should exist between the size of the surface to be decorated and the size and pattern to be used, and heavy mouldings are found projecting with fantastical and impossible shadows in the most unexpected places. The old styles of wall-paper are as bad as this so-called fresco-work; for the designs are opposed to all ideas of good taste or common-sense. We all know those absurd ribbons straggling down the paper at perfectly regular intervals, each strip reproducing exactly the same undulations of its parallel neighbors, sometimes connected by small bunches of flowers repeated with mechanical precision every third or fourth row, and usually in indescribable colors. These wall-papers are shaded with vigor to throw out the phantasmagorical attempts of the designers; and if the shadows, which, of course, are always on the same side all over the paper, are right on the one side of the room, they are necessarily wrong on the other side.

Modern advance in good taste in household art has nearly abolished these deplorable errors

in wall-paper patterns, and has replaced them by conventional outlines, often printed in only one tint, or at most in four, on a dull neutral ground. The general effect thus produced is low in tone, and presents a suitable background for paintings or other bits of color that are placed near them. But, as in every thing else, in house furniture a great deal depends on the selection made of a proper article. In Dr. Henry's house every paper was selected for some particular reason, and we cannot give the reader more useful advice than by setting forth the reasons the Doctor had for selecting those papers which add so much to the general effect of his establishment.

The entrance hall, the staircase, the large hall through which the sweeping curve of the stairs pass, between the front and back rooms, the upper hall up to the stucco-work of the skylight at the top of the dome, are all papered with a very simple pattern of an ordinary faience tile, very much like those used in the last century by the French for wall decoration. The figure, which is flat, is in blue on a white ground; on every alternate tile the white is changed to a bluish green; but both the blue and the green are pale, and recall the famous Chinese color "Tsi-tsing," or "sky-blue after rain." In fact, the "tout ensemble" of the stairway, with its soft light and delightful tone of color, suggests the impression which might be produced by being surrounded by the most exquisite blue and white porcelain. A detail worthy of notice is that the colors of the paper are repeated in the stucco and mouldings everywhere where it can be done. Thus in the dome over the stairs the blue and white go up to the very edge of the glass.

In the reception-room on the first floor, the wall-paper, made by Beck, shows a small interlaced leaf in olive green and dull gold ground, of oriental character. On the ceiling is painted a bamboo border, ornamented with the same leaf, thus connecting the decoration of wall and ceiling. In the dining-room the ground of a narrow ornamental band running round the ceiling has been painted with the ground color of the wall-paper, carrying out the same idea. This occurs all through the house.

On landing in the large hall on the second floor, we

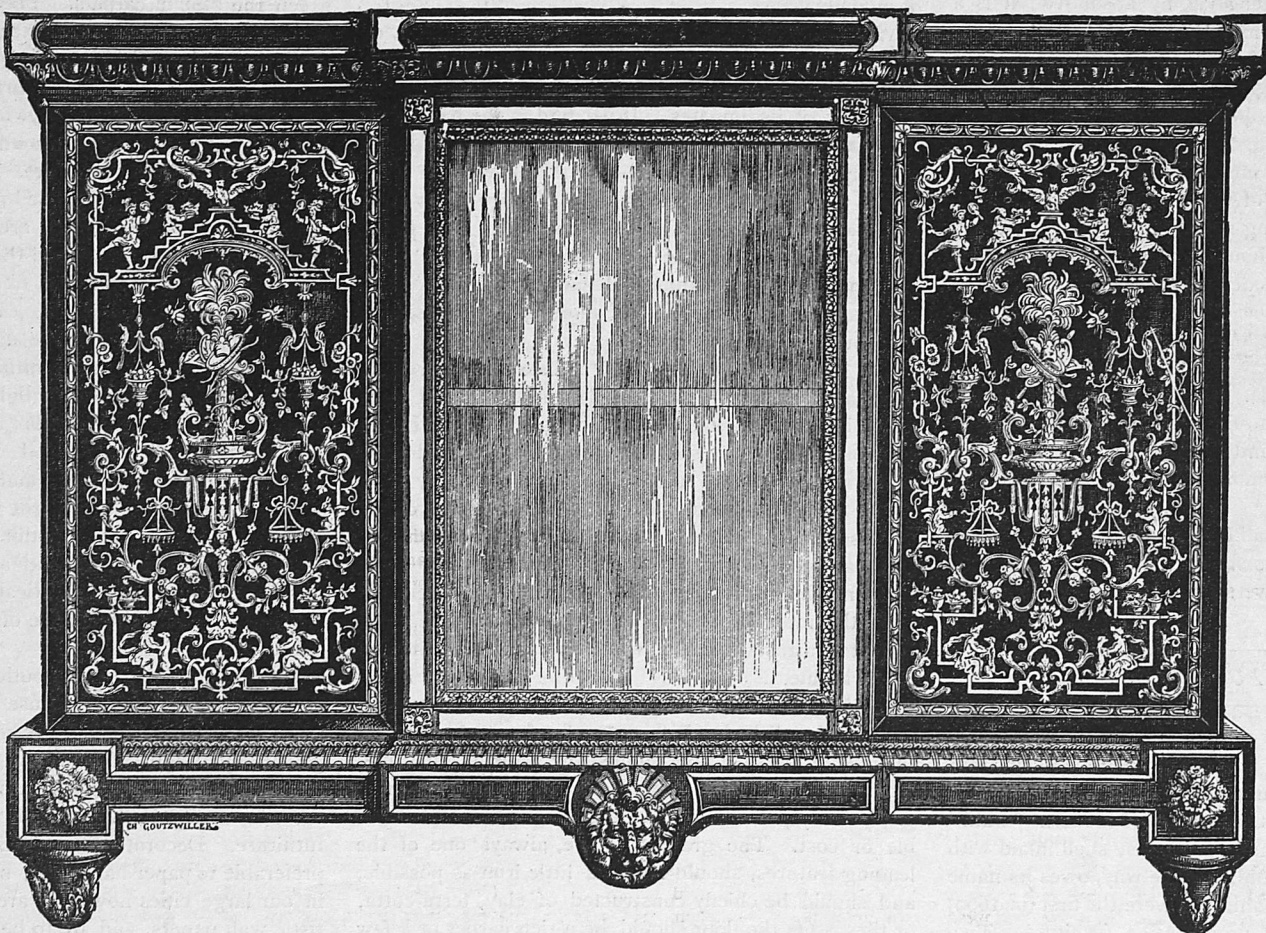
find the monotony of the blue and white tile relieved by a fine stand of arms. A Persian helmet and shield, with damascene in gold, of great merit, form the centre of a panoply of Toledo blades, French court swords, Solingen rapiers, and daggers, flanked by a pair of Turkish silver pistols. By an ingenious contrivance, this trophy stands on an upright easel, the position of which can be changed to suit the light.

In the large recess opposite the head of the stairs is a very large moose's head, which, by being cut off at the shoulders instead of close to the ears, as usual, conveys a much better idea of the enormous size of the animal. Below this, and on each side of a portrait in a carved and gilt Florentine frame are two panels painted by Thom: "Winter," with two little children carrying holly through the snow; and "Summer," represented by other children feeding goats in the midst of a warm landscape. The frames are flat bands of gilt wood, showing the grain, and well adapted to separate the paintings from the wall. In the niches on the stairs stand two bronzes of a fine, old-fashioned, dark, warm color, much more in harmony with the rest of the tints than would be the newer bronzes, which, giving yellow reflections, would be out of place in this blue and white atmosphere. They stand on black wood pedestals. From this hall we step into the dining-room at the back of the house.

There is a great error common among professional house-decorators, who too often allow their knowledge of what is right to become entirely subservient to expediency, and which the public calmly submit to without daring to think for themselves. The error to which we refer has in this house been very successfully avoided. We mean the division of walls into parallel bands called wainscoting, dado, and frieze. In rooms of large dimensions, in public buildings, and concert halls, the proper use of these decorations may produce grand effects; but in houses of ordinary size they reduce the apparent height of the wall by dividing it. A man dressed all in one color—black, for instance—looks much taller than a man of the same height who wears a white vest cutting him in two.

Another popular fashion is the unnecessary use of draperies, which, useful and ornamental in large rooms, impede ventilation and suggest stuffiness in small ones. Especially in dining-rooms drapery should be used sparingly; first, because thorough ventilation is essential; secondly, because the smell of the dishes, and especially that of tobacco-smoke, is very likely to settle in it. The best material for dining-room furniture, for the same reason, is leather.

In the dining-room under consideration these principles have been well carried out. The wall (from the floor to a band of plain maroon velvet paper, a few inches wide, running around the room between two light gilt beadings immediately under the ceiling) is



A BUHL BUFFET, BY BERAÏN (XVII CENTURY). IN THE COLLECTION OF COUNT H. DE GREFFULHE. (SEE PAGE 34.)

covered with a paper, low in tone, composed of a maroon ground broken by a golden figure and a blue, yellow, and green leaf. The general effect of color recalls that tint which artists are so fond of using in their studios. The carpet, in perfect harmony with the rest, is covered with a Berlin rug. These rugs are of a warmer color and better adapted to our style of furnishing than the Turkish, which are often hard and unyielding in color. The furniture, including a handsome wooden mantel surmounted by a large framed mirror, is of black-walnut, with French walnut panels. The gas fixtures and mantel ornaments, consisting of a clock and candelabra, decorated with appropriate groups of game, are in dark bronze and match well the walnut furniture. A soft light comes in through the windows, the lower halves of which are in stained glass, representing two female figures—Pomona and Ceres. Above these the light is filtered by the green boughs of trees outside.

Little bits of pottery on the sideboards and brackets, a few pieces of choice iridescent glass, some brilliant Kaga bowls, and just enough silver to relieve the color of the whole, and suggest that the room is a dining-room—without hanging plates on the wall or exhibiting salvers and pitchers on the sideboard—complete the decoration. Plates, dishes, and silver are meant not for decoration, but for use and safe keeping in the pantry. On the walls are water-colors by Brizat, Koeck, Sangier, Martin, Dominguez, Francis and Predilla hung with taste at a height which allows them to be seen at the best advantage, and in frames well calculated to produce the best harmony between the tone of the painting and that of the paper on the wall behind it.

The paper in the front parlor is of maroon velvet with a gold figure. The figure is, of course, flat, while the velvet is slightly raised. This simple cause produces a charming effect; for the further off you look—that is to say, where the line of vision forms a smaller angle with the wall—the maroon color is the strongest; but if you look at the paper in front of you, both gold and maroon are about of the same intensity. The carpet is gray, covered with rugs well selected as to the amount of color necessary.

The furniture is ebonized wood, and supports some charming bits of bric-a-brac, among which is an old Satsuma vase of great merit, decorated with children at play; a tray, a small goblet, and a box of Japanese damascene in gold and silver on iron. The oil paintings on the walls, though none of them of such size as would suggest the propriety of placing them in a gallery instead of a parlor, are all of great merit, and good specimens of the work of the artists whose signatures they bear. On an easel is a sketch in charcoal, by Schreyer, full of life and action. Near by is a small painting in the Meissonier style, by Lasanovo; it is a yawning soldier of the time of Louis XIII. The artist seems in this picture to have done his best to transgress every set rule in composition, and the result is charming. Lefebvre, Moussin père, Swain Gifford, Calame, André, Dominguez, Terta, Nehlig, Couturier, etc., etc., are represented on the walls.

The study or surgery of the doctor is decorated in a very quiet and unassuming style. A book-case runs all around the room with cabinets which conceal from view the instruments, medicines, and other paraphernalia of the medical man.

In the bedrooms the same idea of art is carried out, and we regret that we have not the space to enable us to go into further details. We will only mention one instance, in which chromo-lithographic reproductions of some of Doré's blue and white gouaches in ebony frames produce a charming effect on a light fawn-tinted paper.

In a word, from the hall-door to the top of the house the most perfect taste is shown, and a judicious distribution of plants and flowers adds to the general pleasing effect.

FREDERIC VORS.

BUHL FURNITURE.

LET the reader study the "buffet," by Berain, a designer of rare fancy, of the seventeenth century, from the collection of the Count H. de Greffulhe, which we give on another page. It is a piece of modern "buhl" work, of Italian renaissance, in tortoise-shell inlaid with copper. This word "buhl," by the way, owes its name to André and Charles Buhl, who were the first (in 1669) to employ this mode of ornamenting furniture. Two

plates of veneer were made at the same time from a sheet of tortoise-shell covered with one of brass of equal thickness. The design was then sawed out through both plates at once, and when finished they were exact counterparts of each other, only the ornaments that were in brass in one, were in shell in the other, and vice versa. Occasionally ornament in "buhl" furniture was displayed by incrustations of "copper and tin," also upon a ground of tortoise-shell. Sometimes carvings and ornaments in gilded bronze completed the decoration of this kind of furniture. Here the design in question is reviewed as ensampling the peculiar style where ornamentation is the first attraction and not secondary, and is therefore wrong. The "bayaderes," birds, and the women toying with dogs are full of life and delicately executed; but the plate glass door is the pleasantest portion of the buffet, for it admits of a choice display of bric-a-brac behind it. However, it may be allowed that the form of the buffet is agreeable, and we have as an ensemble a delicately wrought piece of furniture, which may be met with in ten thousand homes in France, and half as many probably in this country.

HINTS FOR HOME FURNISHING.

SOME of the "Hints on Domestic Furniture and Decoration," which Mr. Watt wrote but a few months ago to his English friends and customers, might be addressed with equal propriety to an American public; and in the present article we shall freely avail ourselves of them. "Although no very great genius," he says, "has arisen to mark the age, and no very large measure of encouragement has been granted, there has been an extension of art among the general public, a diffusion of artistic feeling within the last few years, beyond expectation; sure signs of the oncoming of a condition of things, when we may hope for such a measure of grace and beauty in all our work as may be equivalent, perhaps more than equivalent, to what is popularly called genius." This is certainly true of this country, which since the Centennial Exhibition has received a wonderful stimulus in the development of art in almost every branch of industry. And no trades have profited by it more than those connected with the furnishing and decoration of the home.

The plan and design of a house are within the province of the architect, and it is his better province to furnish the means of securing those two elementary necessities of a residence—good light and fresh air. It is for him to arrange adequately our rooms; halls, passages, windows, doors, etc. But in furnishing the home—in which the conditions of Economy, Utility, Fitness, and Beauty are to be considered—every man or woman, rich or poor, should find a field for the display of individual taste.

Whether it is a mansion or cottage, the entrance, or hall, first attracts attention, and from it may often be gathered the style of the whole house, and the artistic character of its inmates. If we find in the hall either quaintness or grace, one or other will be found developed upon further acquaintance with the house.

The walls of the hall should be of a warm or cool tint, according to the aspect; the floor may be of Mosaic work—either fine work, like that called "opus Alexandrinum," or common Mosaic, or inlaid slabs of marble; but unglazed tiles are more generally used in this country, and are preferable.

The furniture should be of a substantial character, and made of oak or teak, designed and arranged so as to avoid anything like a crowded appearance. If the halls or landings are spacious, marble busts and statues may be placed in suitable positions with very good effect; but the pedestal, though reasonably plain, ought to be something more than a piece of a column or a boundary post. The carpet on the stairs, being exposed to much observation and wear, should be selected from the most durable in the market, and free from violent contrasts, such as white on dark red, or lemon on dark blue.

In the DINING-ROOM, indeed, and for most rooms, the use of polished oak floors, or at least a margin of two feet of polished floor against the walls, is advisable. Thin parquet, such as may be seen in Broadway stores, or ordinary pine floor, can be laid with but little trouble or cost. The grate or stove, always one of the leading features, should have as little iron as possible, and should be chiefly constructed of clay, terra-cotta, or tiles. On the floor should be a rich carpet or a few

large rugs. The walls, if lofty, may be broken by a dado, three feet or more from the skirting or even to two thirds of the wall, according to one's taste; and the paper-hangings or decorations should gradually get lighter in tone towards the ceiling. This last-mentioned feature should be decorated with either raised plaster-work or paintings, or, if the cost of these is too great, papers like those specially designed for ceilings can be used. Gold leaf should be used in mass and well distributed, or not at all.

The furniture should be of one color, but may be in two or more tones of the particular color selected. In some cases the sideboard may be adapted to the architecture of the room, and be built up as a fixture to balance the mantel-piece. All glitter of French polish or varnish should be avoided: if reflections are desired, let them be secured by polished metal or silvered glass.

The window-hangings and portières might be made of some soft and thick material, and should either hang from a plain and small brass rod, only just touching the floor, or from a rod within a square-cut valance. The soft light of lamps or candles is to be preferred to the usual large chandelier hung high up, which illuminates chiefly the ceiling.

Quiet and reposeful effect should be essayed in the adaptation of the LIBRARY, compatible with a full light, but carefully subduing all strong sunlight. Book-cases should be arranged so that the light may enable one at all times readily to read the title of every book in its place. The cornice or covering shelf should not be more than seven feet from the floor. A movable top with rack, adjustable for all sizes of books, should be fitted on one of the library tables; large folios require to be tilted up so as to be read easily. An atlas stand for large atlases should be there, on large castors. Plate-glass doors to book-cases (they came in only with Queen Anne) are a mistake. A large table in the middle of the room, upon which you can pile up books, if necessary, on which a stand for reference books may be fixed, is of direct use; and the comfortable chairs and shaded lamps, and a portière over the door to deaden sound, belong to what is a place of study and quiet. Many elderly gentlemen are prone to sleep in their library.

In a DRAWING-ROOM, Grace, Elegance, and Lightness should rule, and all the objects which could bear these epithets *should find themselves at home*, and not, as is too often the case, "placed." Though the color of the decorations may be dark or light, sombre or gay, there should not be too great a contrast between the walls and the furniture. Carpets or rugs should accord with the general scheme of the decorations. Warm colors on the walls may require reducing by patches of warmer color in rugs, or masses of green and blue in carpets. There is much refinement, if the furniture be not too dark, in the use of choice Turkish or Kurrachee rugs brightening the best plain Chinese matting. Let not the furniture be too crowded; let each piece, however unique, help on the general harmony. Gas is very rightly condemned as very injurious to fine decorated furniture.

So much of our life is passed in our BEDROOMS, that sanitation and cheerfulness are first requisites. Polished floors should prevail, so that the rugs or strips of carpet or matting may be frequently taken up and cleaned. Plain light colors, easily renewable, should distemper the ceiling and the upper part of the walls. The construction of the furniture being light, yet still strong, the use of all woods light in tone is preferable. The American light woods are numberless: ash, maple, oak, and satin-wood are always at hand. Furniture should always be made in such a manner as to be easily moved. It might well be raised clear of the floor, so as to avoid anything like dust-traps. For the same reason flat-topped articles, as wardrobes, should be kept as low as practicable, that servants' labor may be saved and the chance of dust accumulation reduced.

The dull and depressing outlook of street windows, in a great town, call for the use of stained glass, leaded up in patterns, or plain glass set in fine wood-work of geometric design. But unless great care is used the light through the colored glass may ruin the effect of the other colors in the room, as well as the lines of the furniture. Decorated or painted walls are, as a rule, preferable to paper-hangings; but there are a few firms in our large cities now who are making a study of artistic wall papers, and are to be trusted.